

Knowledge of Gond Art in Mahakoshal Region

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ABSTRACT

Gond art is tribal painting of Madhya Pradesh practised on exterior walls of the house to bring good luck by Gond tribe. The present study was conducted to know knowledge of Gond tribe residing near the banks of Narmada River. Two districts namely Dindori and Mandla district of Mahakoshal region of Madhya Pradesh were selected to assess the knowledge of Gond art. Knowledge regarding themes, signature pattern, design, motifs, colours, media used and institutions involved in promotion of art were assessed.

Key words: Tribal painting, Gond art, signature pattern, design, motifs, colour, media

1. INTRODUCTION

India has a tradition of painting on various objects, particularly on the floors and walls of homes. Unique bright colourful designs which are treated with religious and spiritual motifs are present in Indian tribal paintings. Some of the tribal paintings from different states are Saura paintings of Odisha, Warli paintings from Maharashtra, Santhal paintings of Bihar, Pichhwai paintings of Rajasthan, Pithora paintings of Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, Bhil paintings of Madhya Pradesh, Gond paintings of Madhya Pradesh, etc.

Gond is the major tribe of Madhya Pradesh and famous for their Gond art. Gond or Koi or Koiture, the major tribe of Madhya Pradesh dated back to thousands of years. The Gond word comes from *kond* means green mountains in the Dravidian idiom. Gond art showed with the faith that “viewing a good image begets good luck”. This hereditary faith directed the Gond to beautify their houses and the floors with traditional motifs and was believed to carry good luck.

Gond wall arts are distinguished for their effortless forms. Outside walls are decorated with a border in yellow, red, black colours and on inside walls they make reliefs. Rectangles and inverted triangles are geometrical patterns generally drawn in this art. Gond art has a different range of creative styles, mainly related to particular painters and their practices. One of the recognizing element is the practice of ‘signature pattern’ that is used to ‘infill’ the bigger arrangements on the canvas. These infill arrangements are distinguishing recognizable symbols used by the Gond artists and every Gond painter has established his or her own signature arrangement.

The community of Gond tribal is slowly shrinking due to increase in urbanization and migration of younger generation to another place for better living options. There is an absence of proper training and a fixed market which threatens to kill this attractive tribal art. Commercialization of this art will create a

new source of income to the artists as this has achieved reputation in the national and international art market. The present study was conducted the objective to assess the knowledge of Gond art in Mahakoshal region of Madhya Pradesh.

2. METHODOLOGY

Origin of Gond art is rooted in the history of Madhya Pradesh. Mahakoshal region of Madhya Pradesh which comprise of Dindori and Mandla district, where maximum population of Gond tribe resides was selected for the study. The researcher selected 60 respondents by snowball techniques. A structured interview schedule, developed by the researcher was used to collect the required information about knowledge of Gond art.

3. RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The socio-personal traits of the respondents are shown in Table 1. Data given in the Table 1 indicate that the 56.67 per cent of the respondents belonged to the age group as 30-45 years followed by 35.00 per cent respondents who belonged to 15-30 years age group. The data pertaining to education revealed that 30.00 per cent of respondents were qualified up to primary and 26.67 per cent were qualified up to upper primary. It was observed that 66.67 per cent of respondent belonged to nuclear family. The monthly income of the respondents was categorized into four groups. The finding of the study revealed that 43.33 per cent of respondents belonged to Rs. 2,000 – 5,000 followed by 41.67 per cent respondents belonged to Rs. 5,000 – 8,000.

Table 1
Socio-personal traits of the respondents (N=60)

S.No.	Socio-personal traits	No. of respondents	Percentage
1.	Age	15-30 years	21
		30-45 years	34
		More than 45 years	5
2.	Sex	Men	49
		Women	11
3.	Marital status	Married	49
		Unmarried	11
4.	Education	Illiterate	7
		Primary	18
		Upper primary	16
		High school	11
		Graduate	8
5.	Main occupation of the respondent	Farmer	12
		Government job	2
		Private job	4
		Artist	27
		Student	6
		Carpenter	3
		Conductor	1
		Labour	5
6.	Monthly family income	Rs. 2,000 – 5,000	26
		Rs. 5,000 – 8,000	25
		Rs. 8,000 – 12,000	7
		More than Rs. 12,000	2
7.	Type of family	Nuclear	40
		Extended	1
		Joint	19

Table 2 indicates how respondents have knowledge regarding Gond art. It is apparent from the Table 2 that 38.33 per cent respondents were aware about Gond art through observation from camps and exhibitions followed by 35.00 per cent of the respondents who knew about Gond art through their parents. It shows that all the respondents were aware about Gond art from various sources.

Table 2 Source of information about Gond art (N=60)			
S. No.	Source of information	Frequency*	Percentage
1.	Parents	21	35.00
2.	Neighbours	5	8.33
3.	Relatives	13	21.67
4.	Books	3	5.00
5.	Newspaper / Magazine	2	3.33
6.	Observation	23	38.33

*Multiple response

Table 3 indicates knowledge regarding themes used in Gond art. The data tabulated in Table 3 reveals that majority (85.00%) of the respondents were aware of myths used as the theme of Gond art as it covered the story of origin of Gond tribe followed by 80.00 per cent of respondents who were aware that daily activities used as the theme like cattle rearing, wood cutting in the forest and offerings to God. Every sub-tribe of Gond tribe has its own myth about the origin of Gond tribe and about the origin of Pradhan Gond. Various daily life activities of Gond tribe and myths were traditionally depicted through songs and dance which was translated into Gond art to protect these themes in present times (Indianetzone, 2013). These themes of Gond art were used in present times also to preserve the treasure of Gond tribe therefore, maximum percent of the respondents were aware about these themes. Use of folklore theme in Gond art was known to 76.67 per cent of the respondents. Folklore included the stories of Gods and Goddesses, Gond kings, *Ram Katha*, *Pandava Katha*, local stories, etc. Imagination includes thoughts, expressions and imaginations of artists. Songs of hunting ceremony, rain, wedding and harvesting were converted into pictures and used as themes according to 51.67 per cent of the respondents. Field work like agricultural related work and festivals like *karwa chauth*, *nag panchami* were the themes of Gond art according to 5.00 per cent of the respondents only. Very less number of respondents were aware about the use of field work and festivals as the theme of Gond art because at present time its use was decreased in Gond art due to less demand.

Table 3 Knowledge about themes used in Gond art (N=60)			
S. No.	Theme of Gond art	Frequency*	Percentage
1.	Myths (origin or creation of Gond)	51	85.00
2.	Folklore	46	76.67
3.	Imagination	38	63.33
4.	Daily activities	48	80.00
5.	Translation of songs into pictures	31	51.67
6.	Field and festivals scene	3	5.00

*Multiple response

Knowledge regarding use of different signature pattern in Gond art is given in Table 4. Signature pattern is uniqueness of Gond art which distinguish it from other tribal art. Most of the respondents (96.67%) were aware of dots as the signature pattern followed by 75.00 per cent respondents according to whom fine lines were used as the signature pattern. Only 1.67 per cent respondents were aware that seed shape was used as the signature pattern in Gond art.

Table 4

Knowledge regarding signature pattern used in Gond art (N=60)

S. No.	Signature pattern	Frequency*	Percentage
1.	Dots	58	96.67
2.	Fine lines	45	75.00
3.	Dashes	43	71.67
4.	Geometrical shapes	39	65.00
5.	Seed shape	1	1.67

*Multiple response

Table 5 shows knowledge of designs used in Gond art. According to the Table 5, 83.33 per cent of the respondents were aware of traditional designs like *mahua* tree, *saja* tree, *pakri* tree, *patharwi* birds, *bharhi* birds which were used in Gond art followed by 45.00 per cent of the respondents who were aware about that combination (religious, traditional and modern) designs were used in Gond art. Religious designs like pictures of Gods and Goddesses were used as the designs in Gond art according to 33.33 per cent of the respondents. Only 16.67 per cent of the respondents were aware about use of modern designs like aeroplanes, bicycle and train in Gond art. Similar type of results were found in Saura painting of Orissa as stated by Sharma (2015) where contemporary designs like bicycles, motor car and airplanes are used.

Table 5

Knowledge of designs used in Gond art (N=60)

S. No.	Design	Frequency*	Percentage
1.	Traditional	50	83.33
2.	Religious	20	33.33
3.	Modern/Contemporary	10	16.67
4.	Combination (religious + traditional + modern)	27	45.00

*Multiple response

Data about knowledge of motifs used in Gond art is given in Table 6. It can be observed from the Table 6 that all (100.00%) of the respondents were aware about motifs of Gods and Goddesses used in Gond art followed by 98.33 per cent of the respondents who were aware about birds motifs and flora which were also used as motifs in Gond art. Motifs of Gods and Goddesses like *Shiva*, *Kali*, *Ganesha* were used to depict the myths and folklore of Gond tribe. Motifs of birds like *patharwi*, *bharhi*, peacock, etc. and flora like *mahua* tree, *saja* tree, *pakri* tree, etc. were used in Gond art as these motifs were derived from the surroundings of Gond tribe and were used traditionally to depict the myths, daily activities and folklore of the Gond tribe. Similarly motifs of Gods and Goddesses, birds and flora were also drawn in Madhubani paintings (Wikipedia, 2011). According to 95.00 per cent of the respondents, animal motifs were used in Gond art. Animal motifs include deer, tiger, wild boar, cow, monkey, elephant, horse, etc. Only 6.67 per cent of the respondents were aware that sun and moon were also used as the motifs in Gond art. Sun and moon motifs were not very commonly used in Gond art therefore very few respondents were aware about the use of these motifs in Gond art.

Table 6

Knowledge regarding motifs used in Gond art (N=60)

S. No.	Motif used	Frequency*	Percentage
1.	Gods and Goddesses	60	100.00
2.	Animals	57	95.00
3.	Birds	59	98.33
4.	Fish	35	58.33

5.	Snake	16	26.67
6.	Swastika	10	16.67
7.	Spirits	22	36.67
8.	Human figures	49	81.67
9.	Sun, moon	4	6.67
10.	Flora	59	98.33
11.	Other (Aeroplane, bus, rikshaw)	9	15.00
*Multiple response			

Table 7 reveals the distribution of the respondents according to awareness of colours used in Gond art. According to the Table 7, highest per cent of the respondents (98.33%) were aware that white and black colours were used in Gond art followed by 96.67 per cent of the respondents who were aware that yellow and red colours were also used in Gond art. White, black, yellow and red colours of Gond art were the traditional colours which were used in Gond art from previous times as these colours were available naturally in abundance in the surrounding areas. Only 25.00 per cent respondents were aware that other colours like pink, violet, grey, magenta were also used in Gond art because these colours were not common in Gond art and very few artisans used these colours in the artwork nowadays.

Table 7 Knowledge of colours used in Gond art (N=60)			
S. No.	Colours used	Frequency*	Percentage
1.	Yellow	58	96.67
2.	White	59	98.33
3.	Black	59	98.33
4.	Red	58	96.67
5.	Green	53	88.33
6.	Brown	47	78.33
7.	Blue	56	93.33
8.	Purple	38	63.33
9.	Orange	40	66.67
10.	Other (violet, pink, grey, magenta)	15	25.00
*Multiple response			

The distribution of respondents according to knowledge regarding type of colours used in Gond art is presented in Table 8. Table 8 indicates that 100 per cent respondents were aware about use of synthetic colours for Gond art nowadays. The synthetic colours used were acrylic colours, poster colours and oil paints. Only 25 per cent of the respondents were aware that natural colours were used in Gond art during earlier times but nowadays natural colours are not used. Due to lengthy process of extraction of natural colours in general people shifted to synthetic colours which are ready to use. Similar type of result was given by Bharadwaj (2014) where she mentioned that natural colours were not available nowadays and synthetic colours replaced the natural colours. Gond art of present times were seen in synthetic colours only therefore this information was known to every respondents.

Table 8 Knowledge regarding type of colours and media used for creation of art (N=60)			
S. No.	Type of colours	Frequency*	Percentage
1.	Natural colours	15	25
2.	Synthetic colours	60	100
Media Used			
1.	Through fingers	15	25.00
2.	Brush	60	100.00

3.	Tree bark	15	25.00
4.	Acrylic colour	58	96.67
5.	Poster colours and oil paints	2	3.33
*Multiple response			

Table 8 also furnishes information regarding distribution of the respondents according to awareness of media used for creation of Gond art. According to the Table 8, all (100.00%) of the respondents were aware that brush was used for creating Gond art nowadays and 96.67 per cent of the respondents were aware that acrylic colour was used as media in Gond art. The respondents have seen the artisans working with the brush during exhibitions and camps. Brush has replaced the use of fingers as it is easy to work with brush. Even fine detail and thick lines can be made by brush easily which is not possible with the use of fingers. Only 3.33 per cent of the respondents were aware that poster colours and oil paints were also used as media for Gond art. Gond art with poster colours and oil paints were not common therefore this media was not known among large number of respondents. Distribution of the respondents according to Knowledge of institution involved in promoting of Gond art is shown in Table 9.

Table 9

Knowledge of institution involved in promoting Gond art (N=60)

S. No.	Response	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Yes	45	75.00
2.	No	15	25.00

It is revealed from the Table 9 that 75.00 per cent of the respondents were aware of the fact that there exists an institution which was involved in promoting Gond art. Rest (25.00%), of the respondents were unaware of the institution involved in promoting Gond art.

Tribal Research and Development Institute, Bhopal promote and preserve Gond art by documentation and digitization. *Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya*, Bhopal and *Bharat Bhavan*, Bhopal are museum organizations who organized many camps and workshops at villages of Madhya Pradesh to promote Gond artists for their creative works (Indianetzone, 2013). *Adivasi Kala Parishad*, Bhopal is an institute which was established by Government of Madhya Pradesh for encouraging and preserving Gond art. This institute conducted various programs to promote Gond art. It also worked in collaboration with *Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya* to preserve Gond art (IGNCA, 2014).

Marketing of Gond art articles was done by *Kaladhiragha* shop (*Hasthshilp Vikriya Kendra*, Zila Panchayat, Mandla), Kanha National Park (Mandla), Kapildhara Art Emporium (Dindori), *Bharat Bhavan* (Bhopal) through sales, workshops, displays and exhibitions.

Besides these institutions, Tribal Welfare Department, Government of Madhya Pradesh also encourages Gond artists by giving them awards like *Rajya Hasta Shilpa Puraskar*, *Shikhar Samman* for their creative works and also organized many exhibitions and workshops with art emporiums and museums to give platform to artists (HRI South Asian, 2013).

4. CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that at the time of this investigation most of the respondents had knowledge that mythological themes used in Gond art. Almost all the respondents, i.e., 96.67 per cent were aware that dots were used as the signature pattern in Gond art for filling the designs. The responses of more than three-fourth of the respondents (83.33%) were in the favour of traditional designs which were used in Gond art. All of the respondents knew that the Gods and Goddesses were mainly used as motifs in Gond art. Major colours used in Gond art were white and black colours as indicated by majority per cent of the respondents (98.33%). Synthetic colours were also used for making Gond art nowadays according to the responses of 100.00 per cent of the respondents. Brushes were used as media for creating Gond art according to 100.00 per cent of the respondents. Three-fourth of the respondents (75.00%) were aware of the institution involved in promoting Gond art. The respondents were found aware about Gond art and felt that this art needs to be popularized in order to preserve its beauty by adapting it for versatile uses.

SUMMARY OF RESEARCH

Respondents were residing in Mandla and Dindori district which comes under Mahakoshal region of Madhya Pradesh. In this region Gond art is used to decorate the walls of the houses to bring good luck. Some respondents seen Gond art in their surrounding and some respondents inherited it. There are various sources which helped the respondents to learn about Gond art and they had the information regarding themes, signature pattern, design, motifs, colours, media used and institutions involved in promotion of Gond art. Traditional themes, designs, motifs and media is still using in Gond art by amalgamating with new and contemporary ones to accomplish the present times demand.

FUTURE ISSUES

I believe that institutions and government have to pay attention towards the popularization of Gond art. A platform should be provided for Gond art so that it can expand itself in various areas like interior, textiles etc. to save it from being extinct in modern world.

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Conflicts of interests

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interests.

Data and materials availability

All data associated with this study are present in the paper.

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